

LESSONS FORGOTTEN: COMPARING THE OCCUPATION OF GERMANY WITH IRAQ

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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IRAQ**

by

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ABSTRACT

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The allied occupation of Germany following World War II was a success in transforming that nation from a devastated dictatorship into a productive democratic nation. The United States forgot the lessons of how to occupy a nation between the end of World War II and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. During this period, the US has either failed to perform occupations well or denied the necessity of an occupation. This "occupational denial" has resulted in the failure to acknowledge, and subsequently plan for the occupational necessities thus becoming obstacles to achieving success. Examples of failure to plan and execute include Panama and Somalia. The failure to apply the lessons learned from the World War II occupation of Germany directly resulted in the explosion of sectarian violence and the insurgency in Iraq. This paper will show: the successful occupational structure and procedures learned from its experience with Germany; the shortcomings of the occupation in Iraq; and the necessity of these lessons in planning and executing future occupations.

LESSONS FORGOTTEN: COMPARING THE OCCUPATION OF GERMANY WITH IRAQ

If you concentrate exclusively on the victory, with no thought for the after-effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war.

—B.H. Liddell Hart

Throughout its history, the United States has failed to heed Liddell-Hart's caution regarding post-conflict operations that in some cases lead to disastrous results. Post-conflict operations failure following World War I and leading to World War II is the prime example of not heeding Liddell-Hart's theory. The occupation of Germany and Japan post-World War II is a prime example of success when following his theory.

Joint operations doctrine states that “knowing when to terminate all types of military operations and how to preserve achieved military objectives are keys to attaining the national strategic end state. Once established, the national strategic end state and termination criteria enable development of the military strategic objectives and military end state.”¹ In addition, “Joint force planning and operations conducted prior to commencement of hostilities should establish a sound foundation for operations in the “stabilize” and “enable civil authority” phases. Joint Force Commanders (JFCs) should anticipate and address how to fill the power vacuum created when sustained combat operations are concluded. Accomplishing this task should ease the transition to operations in the “stabilize” phase and shorten the path to the national strategic end state and handover to a civil authority.”²

In very few instances throughout its history has the United States militarily invaded, conquered and occupied a nation-state with either the eventual result, or

specific aim, of replacing the existing government with a democratic form of government. Germany and Japan following World War II, Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989 are the few examples that exist prior to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). OEF was the invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow the al-Qaeda supporting Taliban government; Afghanistan was a failed state, vice a legitimate internationally recognized government. OIF, on the other hand, was the invasion of a sovereign state whose government was recognized by the vast majority of the United Nations. Despite the U.S. justification that it was invading Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and not to wage war with the Iraqi people; the operation was indeed an invasion and occupation of the country to replace the government. This action required planning and execution to ensure a successful end result in accordance with the U.S. strategic objective of regime change and operational objectives of securing oil fields and water infrastructure.³ Whether one agrees with the premise for invading Iraq or not, the planning and execution for what was commonly known then as Phase IV (post conflict operations) was severely deficient. Evidence of this is indicated by the resultant looting and lawlessness that ensued across the country following the collapse of Saddam's regime. The disappearance of basic governance, and the coalition's failure to fill the gap, directly lead to the insurgency and sectarian violence between the many religious, ethnic and political groups within Iraq.

The model for a successful occupation belongs to the United States and its allies, less the former Soviet Union, in its occupation of Germany post World War II. Over 60 years following the culmination of World War II, Germany is a stable, peaceful and prosperous democracy that does not threaten its neighbors. In fact, Germany is listed

by the International Monetary Fund, the CIA World Factbook and the World Bank as the third largest economy in the world as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁴ Notably, the second largest economy in the world is Japan, a nation also occupied by the United States post World War II, albeit under circumstances that differed from Germany, as the occupation of Japan did not require an invasion.⁵

This paper examines the planning and execution of the post World War II occupation of Germany, the post OIF planning and execution of the occupation of Iraq and then compares the two operations to determine the lessons the United States failed to remember since the occupation of Germany. It remains to be seen whether the occupation of Iraq will lead to a stable, peaceful and prosperous democracy as it did in Germany and Japan. As of this writing, the surge of troops into Iraq that began in 2007 has led to a decrease in violence and an increase in the Iraqi people's security. If the United States properly planned and executed the occupation of Iraq following OIF, the situation would not have deteriorated to the point of near defeat. It is entirely plausible that if the U.S. had not botched the initial occupation, they would no longer require a substantial presence in Iraq almost six years after the invasion. Iraq could also be much farther down the road to peace prosperity and stability utilizing revenues generated by the high oil prices of 2008 and investing those windfalls in infrastructure and quality of life for its people.

Pre-War and Early War Planning for Occupation

Significant planning occurred at both Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHEAF) and within the U.S Army in preparation for the eventual unconditional surrender of Germany on May 8, 1945. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme

Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) and Commanding General of the United States Army in the European Theater, understood that when the war terminated there would be a protracted post-war operation to restore stability to Europe. His knowledge of the failure of postwar planning and occupation of Germany following World War I contributed to his understanding of its importance after World War II. It is accepted by historians and scholars that the poor postwar planning and occupation of Germany following World War I was contributor to the commencement of World War II.

The initial concept of the successful allied occupation of Germany actually began in the 1930's. Colonel Irwin Hunt, the American Military Governor of Occupied Germany from 1918-1920, published a report in 1920 documenting the need for post war preparation for government authority. At the time, it was the policy that neither the Army nor the U.S. government accepted control of the government of occupied areas as a legitimate military function. Despite the fact that from 1847 through the post World War I period, the Army had conducted military government in Mexico, the Confederate States during reconstruction, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Rhineland of Germany would illustrate the disregard for this policy.⁶

Throughout the 1930s military government doctrine was relegated to military law manuals until the Army G-1 (personnel) prepared a draft manuscript on administration of occupied territory in 1939. This manuscript was rejected by the lead agent for military government at the time, the Judge Advocate General (JAG) believed the current Field Manual (FM) 27-10, *The Rules of Land Warfare*, contained sufficient material on civil administration.⁷ No one prior to World War II had foreseen the possibility of a military occupation and government. The Army hadn't even recognized the need for a

permanent Military Police Corps until November 1941. During prior conflicts, military police, just as military government, were detailed when required by the conditions in the field.

When war broke out in Europe, the Army G3 and G1 urged the JAG to begin work composing a separate manual regarding Military Government. The result was the publishing of FM 27-5, *Military Government*, published 30 July 1940 outlining the policies procedures and purposes for military government.⁸ Despite the publishing of military government doctrine, it was a full two years before the Army authorized the establishment of a training course for military government.

On 2 April 1942, the Secretary of War authorized the establishment of a school of military government at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, Virginia. The first course of fifty officers opened on 11 May 1942.⁹ The most difficult task the school had to accomplish was to determine the requirement for the number of officers who required training through the end of the war. As territory became liberated and the occupiers gone, the military would be responsible for civil administration of territories over and above enemy land since the majority of governments were in exile or non-existent in the occupied countries. The Army recognized there was no one else who could do the job feasibly. The historical record the School of Military Government used to determine requirements was based on the World War I occupation requirement of .1 percent of the occupation force. Assuming a force of 4 million troops the need was set at 4,000 officers. This estimate was made without regard to the size of the occupied population and was irrelevant since the school at its current capacity would take 10 years to produce that many officers.¹⁰ The Army knew that if it could not produce enough officers

to accomplish the mission of occupation there would be other governmental agencies that would try to fill the gap with a separate chain of command, consequently, making it more difficult for theater commanders to control their area of operations. MG Allen Gullion, the Provost Marshal General and former Army JAG, requested the authority to increase the throughput of the training program and to reconcile conflicting views between the military and civilian establishments. Specifically, he wanted the Army to have absolute control over occupied areas during the period of military necessity to ensure adequate preparations were made to fulfill occupation missions.¹¹

On 14 August 1942, MG Guillion received authority to set up a military government division in the Provost Marshal General's Office (PMG) to engage in broad planning. The military government division had its first significant meeting in September 1942 consisting of Undersecretary of War Patterson, Secretary of the Treasury David Morgenthau, Secretary of the Navy Henry Knox and several State Department and Board of Economic Warfare officials. The document that eventually came from the meeting was entitled, "Synopsis of the War Department Program for Military Government." The synopsis asserted initial Army predominance in occupation divided into two phases. During the first phase, the armed forces would establish and maintain a military government and in the second phase, a civilian authority would supplant the military when conditions warranted. Other agencies would be in support of the Army providing specialists and instructors to increase the capacity of the School of Military Government.¹² The concurrence outlined in the Synopsis was very short-lived. Newspapers described the school as a "school for Gauleiters" and several other cabinet level officials voiced suspicions over military governance that eventually reached

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's ear.¹³ The President said that the matter should have been taken up with him in the first instance and that governing territory was a predominantly civilian task and required first class men.¹⁴ Following numerous inquiries, explanations and visits to the school by President Roosevelt's advisors, they informed him that the school itself was not a threat and charges that the Army was producing anti-administration governors were without foundation.¹⁵

The main problem the school faced was enrolling quality officers in the course, as the Army was not willing to send its best officers to a school that was for post-hostility operations, while their expertise was needed during a shooting war. This situation all changed following the allied invasion of North Africa in Operation TORCH. Following the success of the Allied landings, the Army was engaged in civil affairs on a scale it had not contemplated. Technically, responsibility for civil affairs at the time rested with the G-1, which had never exercised it. The Operations Division of the General Staff ended up being the destination for civil affairs matters and decision making was decided in offices scattered throughout the Pentagon.¹⁶

The aftermath of Operation HUSKY, the Allied landing in Sicily, showed clearly to the War Department that it was inevitable a central high level organization was required to conduct civil affairs rather than the scattered decision making that currently existed. The result of this realization was the creation of the Central Affairs Division (CAD) on 1 March 1943. The division reported directly to the Secretary of War on all civil affairs matters, coordinating all actions of civilian agencies in theaters of operation.¹⁷ The CAD was also charged with making certain that all plans to occupy enemy or enemy-controlled territory including detailed planning for civil affairs.¹⁸

The creation of the CAD resulted in an increased demand for quality civil affairs officers that the Army School of Government could not meet. In addition, there was still significant resistance to providing the quantities of people the CAD estimated were required for the administration of occupied territories. The solution to improving the quality and quantity of civil affairs officers was to receive the authority to recruit specialists from civilian life and directly commission them.¹⁹ The increased training requirements would be handled in two phases. Phase one was the basic military training piece to introduce the officers into the Army. Phase two was the civil affairs specific training conducted at the military school of government and also at civilian universities through the Civil Affairs Training Program (CATP). University training provided quality training for the new officers and was easily and rapidly expanded as requirements dictated.²⁰

Thus, the Army had a suitable high level organization to plan and execute occupation tasks. The final task for the War Department was to secure the authority for the Army to be the lead for occupation. President Roosevelt had directed an interagency committee to determine the relationship between civilian administration and military government and the criteria by which the civilian administration would supersede the military government. The President, until the summer of 1943, remained convinced that occupation governments was a civilian job and proposed dual lines of the authority and establishment of an interdepartmental policy committee to give central direction to U.S. operations in occupied areas. The director of an occupied area would be subordinate to the military commander, but would also receive orders directly from the assistant secretary of state.²¹ Events ECLIPSED the President's preference and he

finally came to the realization it was necessary that military governments would be established to provide men and resources when and where they were required. Only the Army had the ability to make this happen. The President acknowledged this state of affairs in a letter to Secretary of War Stimson in which he stated, "The Army will have to assume the initial burden" of occupation.²² Finally, in November of 1943, the Army had a clear mandate to conduct military government.

Planning for Operation ECLIPSE (the Occupation of Germany)

In May 1943, Allied staff officers in London began planning for a complex operation that would arguably have a greater long-term impact on the U.S. than Operation OVERLORD, the invasion of Normandy. The original plan, named Operation RANKIN, was the predecessor of the final plan for the occupation of Germany, Operation ECLIPSE. The planners were handicapped by several factors throughout the planning process for Operation RANKIN and its eventual successor, Operation ECLIPSE. The indecision outlined in the previous section over who would be responsible for the occupation, the lack of planning and policy guidance from Washington, and the fact that the planners were probing uncharted territory, as there were no precedents for successful post-conflict operations to the scale of World War II, from which they could base their plan, were among the most prominent problems that lay before them.²³

Despite the lack of guidance from the political leadership in Washington, General C.A. West, the Deputy G-3, Chief of Staff Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC) in December 1943 issued the most important document on civil affairs produced. The Standard Policy and Procedure for Combined Civil Affairs Operations in Northwest

Europe assigned full responsibility for civil affairs and military government to the military commanders.²⁴ In addition, SHAEF had earlier reorganized its staff elevating the civil affairs section to the level of G-5 and authorized two general officers in the section.²⁵ The section possessed six branches by function: legal, fiscal, supply, government affairs, economic affairs, and information. The headquarters staff was now organized for success by giving authority and responsibility to the G-5.

The initial RANKIN plans were based on three different possible contingencies under which they would be implemented. RANKIN-A would apply in the event of the rapid collapse of Germany, RANKIN-B would apply in the event of the contraction of German forces to the pre-war borders and RANKIN-C envisioned the systematic occupation of all of Germany.²⁶ While the RANKIN plans ultimately were not used, they did generate significant thought about the complexity of occupation. In January 1944, COSSAC, recognized this complexity and called for studies on armistice terms , sanctions, disarmament, displaced persons, prisoners of war, martial law, disposal of captured war materiel and coordination of movement and transportation. By April 1944, seventy-two staff studies were underway on post conflict subjects.²⁷

The result of COSSAC's efforts was a new postwar operations plan codenamed TALISMAN. TALISMAN addressed many of the tasks identified by Major General West and certainly reflected a growing concern and understanding of the magnitude of occupation. The occupation tasks were expanding from temporary caretaking prior to transition to civilian control to include control of the German central government to the extent necessary to prevent any action contrary to the interests of the Supreme Commander. TALISMAN, in fact, estimated the occupation requirement to be thirty-nine

and two-thirds divisions.²⁸ TALISMAN, while broader in focus than the RANKIN plans still did not foresee a long military occupation of post war Germany and anticipated return to civilian control rapidly following the end of hostilities. The second version of the TALISMAN plan expanded on previous staff work and continued investment of staff personnel by the Commander recognizing that an early investment in postwar planning would result in a deliberate process of occupation and eventually reduce the requirement for large expenditures of resources an occupation would require. Another result of early planning was the identification of “requests for information” that would be key in defining the end state by ensuring questions were being asked of the political leadership as to policy guidance and other political issues.²⁹ In October of 1944, SHAEF believed the codename TALISMAN had been compromised and the name was changed to Operation ECLIPSE.

Postwar policy guidance was insufficient for SHAEF's post war planners (Operations RANKIN, TALISMAN and ECLIPSE inclusive) throughout the war period. The only significant document issued was Combined Chiefs of Staff #551 titled “Directive for Military Government of Germany Prior to Defeat or Surrender” by the Combined Civil Affairs Committee (CCAD) on 28 April 1944. This directive gave the commander the authority and responsibility for governing occupied Germany and established basic principles for him to follow. However, the directive could not address postwar U.S. policy (it was an allied directive) and the U.S. military's role following the cessation of conflict. Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, MG Bedell Smith, sought guidance from the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the postwar German government, economy, and partition. These questions continued to remain unanswered through the end of 1944.³⁰

Although the policy questions remained unanswered, SHAEF was forced to deal with the beginnings of an occupation. In September 1944, the first German town was captured by the allies. General Eisenhower issued a proclamation announcing that “Allied Military Government is established in the theater under my command to exercise in occupied territory the supreme...authority vested in me as the Supreme Commander...”³¹ Detachments of military government personnel trained as a result of the Civil Affairs training programs followed behind the advancing forces closely to begin the process of postwar reconstruction and political reorganization under the direction of the combat commanders responsible for the area of operations. These commanders executed the occupation directives issued by SHAEF.

Allied planning continued as parts of Germany became occupied throughout the end of 1944 and the early part of 1945. Late in 1944, the Secretaries of State, War and the Navy formed a coordinating committee to consider postwar policy. This committee provided policy recommendations for President Roosevelt’s Yalta conference in January 1945 between the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the U.S.³² During this conference the Allies proclaimed “their inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world.” In order to accomplish this end, they intended to oversee the complete disarmament, demilitarization, and denazification of Germany.³³ The Yalta proclamation provided planners at all levels with the ends the civilian leadership envisioned.

The result of the allied efforts was Joint Chiefs of Staff directive 1067. JCS 1067 was the first document that issued formal national guidance to General Eisenhower for occupation and guided detailed planning by the U.S. Group Control Council (USGCC) of

European Theater of the U.S. Army (ETOUSA). The first draft of JCS 1067 had been sent to Eisenhower in September 1944 and presented to the Allies at Yalta. Following revisions after Yalta, the JCS issued the final directive in May 1945. Its significant provisions included that Germany would be treated as a defeated enemy and that occupation forces would exert limited control of the economy and distribution of goods and food to prevent disease and unrest. Fraternization was strictly forbidden between soldiers and the German people while the troops oversaw the extirpation of Nazism and militarism.³⁴

At last, the government's ends were stated and the ways to achieve those results could be devised. In early 1945, General Lucius Clay, Chief of the USGCC, was named by General Eisenhower to oversee military government operations in Europe.³⁵ It is surprising that the military made little effort to bring in other potential players such as State and Treasury to determine the ways needed to meet the stated ends. In fact, General Clay had met only with General Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, and Secretary of War Stimson to receive his instructions regarding the postwar occupation. He recalled later that no one had advised him of the State Department's role or relationship with the military government and believed that no one had really thought it out.³⁶ The military was entirely prepared for the occupation and the conduct of military government but was uneasy about the task and sought a rapid transition to civilian control. However, Eisenhower provided guidance to General Clay that he desired an organization that was prepared to turn over authority to civilian control with 24 hours notice.³⁷

Following Victory in Europe (V-E day), the State Department did not appear to have much interest in taking over control of government in Germany in a rapid manner. Eisenhower, through Secretary Stimson, sent President Truman a memorandum recommending the transition date to civilian control of Germany to 1 June 1946. The president approved the date without consulting Secretary of State James Byrnes. Byrnes believed that the State was a policy-making organization and not an operational entity and maneuvered behind the scenes to delay the assumption of the State Department's authority. Byrnes efforts resulted in the continued War Department responsibility for governing Germany until 1949.³⁸

Although not a conscious decision of the government, but because no one else was either prepared or willing to assume the lead for the occupation of Germany, the U.S Army accepted the mission. The ends and the ways were now defined, albeit the ways were solely using the military as an instrument of power. The military planning that commenced in 1943 resulted in both unity of effort and unity of command for the post war occupation and governance, not on purpose but by happenstance. The initial essential tasks the military saw for the ECLIPSE plan were disarmament, disposal of war materiel, control of German prisoners of war, care of Allied prisoners of war, and denazification.³⁹

Tasks continued to evolve as the planning progressed and the plan matured. ECLIPSE eventually consisted of two phases. Phase one occurred simultaneously with Operation OVERLORD, the invasion of Europe, focusing on physical occupation as forces advanced. Phase two was complete occupation following the termination of hostilities. ECLIPSE phase two's essential tasks were to disarm the German Armed

Forces, enforce surrender terms, establish law and order and redeploy Allied forces into the defined national zones. The stage was now set for the occupation to begin.

Execution of Operation ECLIPSE

During the final stages of the war, the U.S. Army had been executing military governance and occupation as areas of Germany came under allied control. The amount of area governed exceeded the capacity of the 150 military government detachments and provisional detachments were formed from anti-aircraft, field artillery, and signal troops by tactical commanders to fill the shortfall.⁴⁰ The detachments remained under tactical control until 1 August 1945 when U.S. Forces European Theater (USFET) established districts under military governors.⁴¹ Once the zones of occupation were designated by the allies, Army forces outside the zone repositioned into the U.S. zone and assumed occupation duties. The U.S. zone was about the size of Kentucky and had a population of about 19 million. The allies faced a vanquished army but still had to secure the population amidst broken civil and physical infrastructure.⁴²

Overall, the military had no shortage of means to accomplish their tasks following V-E Day. On V-E Day, sixty-one U.S. Army divisions were available in Germany. There was, however, a rapid drawdown of forces in Europe following V-E Day, both for demobilization and for redistribution of forces to the Pacific in preparation for the invasion of Japan.⁴³ Of the two army groups and four armies in Germany on V-E Day, by March 1946 only the Third Army remained. The abundance of troops in Germany on V-E Day allowed for rapid disarmament of the German Military and of German Police forces. Troops assumed responsibility for law and order as well as security of all areas to include looted national treasures hidden by the Nazis during the war. The key to the

groundwork for success in the occupation was the rapid assignment of units to be responsible for all villages, cities and towns and to take control, disarm and secure all of the German population.

The combined effort of occupation, demobilization and redeployment to the Pacific was ripe for confusion and disorganization within Germany. Nine months after V-E Day, only 10 divisions and several independent regiments remained for occupation.⁴⁴ This was still a formidable force that still had the numbers to effectively conduct occupation tasks. Organizational problems between the combat commanders and the military government apparatus caused inconsistency of occupation policy. These problems were never fully resolved, but improved considerably when only the Third Army remained in Germany. Fortunately, doctrine existed in the form of FM 27-5 to fill the gap where there was no policy or confusion existed.

Perhaps the greatest success story in enabling the execution of the occupation was the issuance by SHAEF of two publications to assist commanders in occupation. The *Handbook of Military Occupation* was issued down to Battalion level. This handbook provided a single source for every issue units may encounter as they occupied every city and town in Germany. The handbook included plans for establishing governance, disarming Wehrmacht and police, handling Allied POWs and displaced persons, controlling German telecommunications, conducting intelligence and understanding their authorities as the occupying force.⁴⁵

The *Handbook of Military Government* was issued to higher level commands and civil affairs organizations. The handbook contained more detailed instructions including the plan for occupation, initial proclamations, laws, and ordinances. Functional chapters

included civil administration, denazification, finance and property control, legal, public health, labor, education, and religious affairs, food distribution, industry, communications, and transportation. The manual contained a checklist that enabled military government to function effectively.⁴⁶

The final transition from tactical control to military government occurred on 1 January 1946 when General Clay assumed complete control of military government as the Commanding General, Office of Military Government, U.S. Zone (OMGUS).⁴⁷ Now that security was established, control of the occupation centralized, and unity of effort and command established the time came for nation rebuilding and the eventual reestablishment of the German government and sovereignty.

The period of nation-building occurred from 1946-1949 with full sovereignty of Germany transitioning from 1949-1955. Numerous difficulties and complexities existed throughout the period that is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless the breakdown in U.S.-Soviet relations, the Marshall plan, and other events directly affected the occupation, but are not part of the military issues that were faced by OMGUS. During the period of 1946-1949, U.S. military involvement in government declined rapidly as the transition between military and civilian government continued. There were approximately 11,500 military government personnel in Germany in September 1945, declining to under 3,000 by the end of 1946, by mid-1948 it was 301 and by the end of September 1949, when Clay transferred responsibility to U.S. civilian authority there were only 26.⁴⁸

The U.S. approach to nation-building from the bottom-up through centralized control, but decentralized execution worked exceptionally well and the Germans

progressed far more rapidly in the U.S. zone versus the other zones of occupation by using the Germans in large part to conduct the rebuilding under military government supervision. The keys to General Clay's success in the transition of Germany from defeated enemy to rising ally was that he was committed to an occupation that was just, humane, and considered the welfare of the population. He sought to fulfill U.S. and German interests, promoting stability and security that enabled the Germans to cultivate their own democratic beginning.⁴⁹

The evidence of Germany's political and economic success, following the end of World War II to become a great and prosperous democratic nation, illustrates the success of this plan and its execution. The U.S. preparations and planning both before and during the war enabled the successful occupation of Germany. It is an accomplishment that should be modeled and followed for years to come and those that participated should be proud of their accomplishments rightfully.

Lessons Forgotten Between World War II and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

In the intervening years between World War II and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM the U.S. Army paid considerably less attention to the needs of a postwar occupation. The belief was that with the advent of the Cold War and the dual superpower status between the United States and the Soviet Union, occupation of countries would no longer be needed and nation-building would not be a military task. The groundwork for future occupation problems developed again, as a consequence of the mistaken belief that it would never happen again.

The military merged its doctrinal manuals of military government and civil affairs in 1958. The focus of the manual shifted to bureaucratic concerns and unit composition,

versus how they would be employed.⁵⁰ The denial of the possibility of military government became complete with the issuance of FM 41-10 *Civil Affairs Operations* superseding the manuals of the 1950s. The 1969 version of the manual changed the definition of military governance to include liberated territories in accordance with NATO agreements.⁵¹

Civil affairs operations became a mission to work with existing governments in whatever form they may have, and little attention was paid to the circumstance where no functioning government existed. By 2000, FM 41-10 dropped all references to military government and the loss of doctrine was complete. In fact, Joint Publication 3-57, *Civil-Military Operations*, dated 8 February 2001 contained only one paragraph on civil administration in hostile or occupied territory, barely noting that international law addressed provisions for occupation.⁵²

Post-Conflict Planning for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) had planned the invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime for years. Operations Plan (OPLAN) 1003 had been written over several years by CENTCOM as a directed contingency plan, but had not been updated since 1998. Secretary Rumsfeld directed the Commander of CENTCOM, General Tommy Franks to give him a "Commander's Concept" bringing the Iraq planning up to date. The existing OPLAN for the invasion of Iraq and removal of the Hussein regime was based on Desert Storm-era thinking. It was troop-heavy, involving a long buildup of forces, a series of air strikes prior to the actual ground invasion. According to General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM Commander, the plan did not take

take into account current troop dispositions, advances in technology, or what we had learned in Afghanistan.⁵³

General Franks briefed the President as the updated plan started to take shape. During the first of these briefings the President agreed that the overarching concept of this plan was regime change and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) removal.⁵⁴ General Franks had clear “ends” approved prior to execution of the plan. The ends were stated clearly, the means and the ways were now the issues that had to be settled to ensure successful accomplishment of the ends.

CENTCOM spent months revising and updating OPLAN 1003 resulting in the final OPLAN for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, OPLAN 1003V in August, 2002. This plan envisaged the combat operations phase (Phase III: Decisive Combat Operations) to last up to one hundred and thirty-five days. Phase III called for the employment of about one hundred and five thousand troops from all services. Phase IV, entitled Post-Hostility Operations, originally foresaw force levels growing from the initial one hundred and five thousand troops to levels as high as two hundred and fifty thousand. General Franks’ plan stated that “Phase IV would continue until our end state objectives were met.”⁵⁵

As planning and discussions with the Nation’s senior leaders continued through 2002, General Franks made clear to the President and Secretary of Defense that a maximum of two hundred and fifty thousand troops would be required at the end of Phase III. General Franks also stated the major tasks of Phase IV would include establishing a new Iraqi army and creating a constabulary inclusive of all tribal, religious and ethnic groups. Franks noted that well-designed and funded reconstruction projects would be keys to success in Phase IV.⁵⁶

Phase III planning continued in great detail and Franks was confident that decisive combat operations would be over in no more than 90 days. He believed that technology speed and deft maneuvers were the keys to defeating the Iraqi army or as General George Patton termed this principle “haul ass and bypass.”⁵⁷ This principle is extremely useful when trying to defeat the enemy army. The German army implemented this principle earlier in the war when developing their “Blitzkrieg” doctrine using combined arms warfare to thrust deep into the enemy’s rear and cut off forward combat elements. There is a second part to this doctrine that requires ground troops follow the fast-moving armored forces to “mop up” the remnants of the enemy force and ensure security in what now becomes the attacking forces’ rear area. Leaving an unsecured rear area greatly contributes to interdiction of lines of communication and looting by the bypassed forces and the civilian populace. The lack of follow-on forces to secure the rear areas turned out to be a problem in the execution of 1003V.

On 20 January 2003, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 24 explicitly assigning responsibility for conduct of postwar operations to the Defense Department.⁵⁸ This was a good step in enabling national unity of command in Phase IV, but the senior leadership of the Defense Department did not make an effort to collaborate with other departments for their expertise to ensure unity and coordination of effort. The other departments in government maintained a hands-off approach due to the thinking that it was the Defense Department’s show.⁵⁹ Policy guidance to shape Phase IV emerged gradually from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P), Douglas Feith. Feith maintained a tightly contained effort for Phase IV policy in a small circle of the Pentagon because of political sensitivity and a rift between

Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell.⁶⁰ Conflicting assumptions resulted in the military believing that civilian departments were going to accomplish reconstruction tasks and the civilian agencies believing the military was going to perform those tasks.

Military planning for Phase IV was discussed extensively throughout the planning of 1003V. Franks considered modeling a post war Iraq with that of post war Germany or Japan. He recognized that humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and security would be top priorities when combat ended. Planning was based on the assumptions that the U.S. would guide the interim Iraqi government in building a military and paramilitary force serving side by side with Coalition forces to restore order and prevent religious and ethnic clashes.⁶¹ The planners had no shortage of issues to address regarding the policy goal of establishing a representative government in Iraq because Iraq had never been a democracy throughout its existence and had been ruled as a police state under Saddam Hussein.

The planners believed that one of two situations regarding the governance of Iraq may occur in Phase IV; large coalition forces and martial law would be required for years, or the Iraqis might claim their country as their own welcoming their liberation and organizing themselves swiftly without Coalition help. It was believed a consensus leader, such as Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan, could make the establishment of an Iraqi civilian government a short-term prospect. Ahmad Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress, was considered a logical choice although he had not lived in Iraq for over thirty years.⁶² The problem with exiled leaders is that over time they are no longer familiar with the inner workings of their country and may be detached from the

populace. The assumptions that were eventually used were that the military campaign would be decisive and produce a stable security environment; U.S. forces would be greeted as liberators; Iraq's government ministries would remain intact and continue to administer to the country; and that local forces would be capable of providing law and order.⁶³ These assumptions would prove far too ambitious during execution.

Franks was convinced that civilian leadership was required in Phase IV. He said that "in addition to boots on the ground, we would need wingtips on the ground—hundreds, perhaps thousands, of civilians from America and the international community, from government advisors to eager international investors."⁶⁴ The problem with this realization is that there is no such standing force in America or the international community that can be brought to bear at the conclusion of hostilities. Only the Armed Forces has the standing manpower and resources to initiate such a massive operation in a short period of time until civilians can be identified, mobilized and trained to assume a "relief-in-place" of the military forces.

Despite the lack of a standing "wingtip" force, the "means" selected to accomplish occupation and reconstruction was assembled under two headquarters: the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) headed by retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner and the Coalition Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC). ORHA was intended to be a largely civilian organization, but many of its early staff members were military because U.S. civilian agencies were hesitant to provide staff.⁶⁵ ORHA was directly subordinate to CENTCOM, but there was little or no contact between the ORHA and Coalition Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC) planners. In fact, Garner and his staff did not arrive in Kuwait until 16 March, three days

before OIF began.⁶⁶ Due to the divide in responsibilities and the lack of communication between the two headquarters, neither unity of command nor unity of effort existed.

The unchallenged ambitious assumptions, lack of coordinated planning, personalities of senior leadership would result in serious consequences in the post-combat operations phase of OIF.

Execution of the Occupation of Iraq

The execution of Phase III during OIF was a complete success lasting less than thirty days until the now famous scene of U.S. soldiers toppling Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square signaled the end of major combat operations on 9 April 2003. On 1 May 2003, President Bush formally announced the end of major combat operations to the world which officially ended Phase III and began Phase IV of the operation for CENTCOM. Phase III had actually ended earlier than expected and the enablers for Phase IV were not yet in place.

At the onset of Phase IV, the ORHA was still understaffed and underfunded with fewer than 200 officers and technical experts in Kuwait.⁶⁷ ORHA was slow in getting organized and was seemingly hapless in execution. There were no military government detachments following the invasion forces as had happened following Allied troops in World War II. Conditions did not improve rapidly enough for the Bush administration that the timeline was accelerated for the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), ORHA's successor. The CPA's mission was to "oversee Coalition reconstruction efforts and the process by which the Iraqi people build the institutions and governing structures that will guide their futures."⁶⁸

In addition, CENTCOM rapidly began to realize that their assumptions were not holding true and were rapidly falling apart. The Iraqi Army had not surrendered by unit as had been anticipated. The Army had just taken off their uniforms and went home. This caused problems in that the Iraqi Army was not able to be put to work reconstructing the country. Similarly, the Iraqi police forces vanished into hiding or retreated to their homes fearing retaliation from the populace for thirty years of brutality under the Hussein regime. The civil servants of government institutions who ran public works, oil production, public health, education, and telecommunications also remained home.⁶⁹

There were insufficient troops to accomplish the myriad of tasks. The 250,000 troops General Franks estimated for Phase IV did not continue to flow into Iraq. An analysis conducted by Task Force IV, a planning organization for postwar operations, concluded in its troop to task analysis and that ninety battalion equivalents would be need to occupying Iraq totaling approximately 200,000 troops.⁷⁰ The lack of troops and Iraqi security forces caused lawlessness to reign throughout Iraq. The shortfall of troops was further exacerbated by the decision of Franks and Rumsfeld to cease the deployment of the 1st Cavalry Division and other reinforcing forces when coalition forces entered Baghdad.⁷¹ Franks and Rumsfeld's decision was in direct contravention of what General Franks had intended to do (continue flowing forces for Phase IV) as part of the planning for OIF. In comparison, there were fewer troops in Iraq at the outset of post-conflict operations per capita than there were in the Bosnia and Kosovo operations, despite the fact that Bosnia and Kosovo were semi-permissive entry operations and far less destruction was caused on those countries by the US than Iraq.⁷²

The Iraqi people found it hard to believe that the U.S. could be that unprepared or inept and it must be deliberate attempt to extend the occupation of the country.⁷³ The loss of confidence in the U.S. by the Iraqi people and resultant loss of momentum in the jubilation of the population following Hussein's overthrow directly contributed to the growth of the insurgency.

There was a great sense of urgency to return control to Iraqi civilian authority. This despite the fact that security could not be maintained by the Iraqi police, what was left of them. The Iraqi Army had been disbanded by the CPA and was in the process of total rebuilding from the ground up.⁷⁴ U.S. forces redeployed to large base camps and conducted operations into populated areas, but generally did not maintain a long-term presence to solidify security gains. The occupation became an odd game of "whack a mole" where U.S. forces would secure an area only to have another hot spot pop up. U.S. forces would leave the secured area to respond to the new threat and the insurgents would reoccupy the previously secured area once U.S. forces departed. The resultant inability to maintain security led to the rise of militias supported by the people because it was the militias that offered security. Sectarian elements dominated these militias and it was only a matter of time before there would be clashes among the religious groups.

The security problem came to a head when a Shiite mosque was destroyed in February 2006. Violence continued to increase and the Iraqi Army and security forces were not ready, either in training or in equipment to deal with such large security threats. It was the surge of U.S. forces in 2007 that established security in the populated areas by spreading throughout the country from large base camps to establish

permanent presence in neighborhoods to maintain security. The surge allowed time for the Iraqi Government, Army and Police forces to complete training and assume their proper security role. As of this writing, the security situation has improved to the point of relatively stability with the Iraqis having held their second parliamentary elections with little violence.

It is not difficult to reach a conclusion that if we had conducted the “surge” as part of the original ARCENT postwar occupation plan for Iraq, informally designated ECLIPSE II, “Phase IV” may have already been completed, U.S. forces could have been put to better use, and several billions of dollars and thousands of lives may have been spared.

Lessons Forgotten and Implications for the Future

It is imperative in order to not repeat the same mistakes that the U.S. acknowledge the fact that at some point in our future, America will occupy and rebuild a nation regardless of the current world situation. When undertaking an endeavor as large as removing the government of a country by force, the ends must be clearly stated by the political leadership and the appropriate means must be provided to ensure those ends are met. The U.S. possesses huge capabilities in the use of military force making them second to none in war fighting.

The most difficult part of any campaign is not the actual overthrow of a government and taking of a country, but what to do with the country once you have it. The U.S. has a long history of fixing things that they break and Iraq has been no exception, as we broke the Hussein regime and desired to replace that government with something better. Successful occupation requires significantly more resources than the

actual taking of a country. All the elements of national power must be brought to bear to ensure that the conditions that caused the war and occupation in the first place cease to exist at its eventual end state. Technology can be used to great advantage to reduce casualties on both sides and cause a rapid termination of hostilities. Technology, however cannot replace the boots on the ground required to secure ground, maintain stability and to prevent the onset of an insurgency. This can only be accomplished by the American Soldier and Marine. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-07, *Stability Operations*, 6 October 2008, begins to address these challenges and concerns, especially that of “Transitional Military Authority.”

The decision not to augment additional forces after the culmination of major combat operations was a fateful one. The forces that remained following major combat were insufficient to secure not only the civilian areas of the country, but also could not secure the multiple weapons storage sites the Hussein regime amassed over its thirty years of rule. This enabled multiple elements, religious radicals, Ba’athists, and other criminal groups to arm themselves without cost by looting those sites. The failure to secure and disarm the country and subsequent arming of these groups directly attributed to the rise of lawlessness and insurgency that developed from 2003-2004.

The U.S. must acknowledge to itself that a military government organization, in addition to its civil affairs structure, is necessary if we are not to repeat the mistakes we made in Iraq. If not a military government structure than a similar standing “fly-away” civilian government structure must be established to accomplish government tasks when the U.S. removes a regime and occupies a country. However, the Congress is unlikely to appropriate funds for such a standing civilian organization, and never has in

the past. Therefore, the military continues to remain the logical choice for governance in an occupation until such a time as civilians can assume the mission.

Currently, the surge of troops in Iraq that commenced in 2007 has established a level of security that has allowed Iraq to become more stable and conduct its second round of elections in relative peace. Violence is down throughout the country since the surge began. If the U.S. had entered Iraq with the right amount of force to accomplish both the invasion and subsequent occupation tasks, as in World War II, perhaps our occupation would have only lasted four years or less, as in post-war Germany, versus the current seventh year we are now entering.

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